



Standards for Participation in Paths to QUALITY

Preschool Classrooms in Public Schools

A series of five black silhouettes of people in various walking poses, positioned along a curved, upward-sloping path that spans the width of the header.

Indiana Department of Education

Glenda Ritz, NBCT

Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction

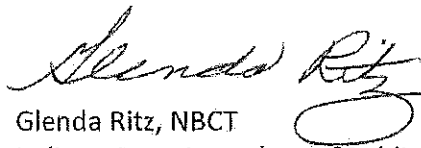
October 10, 2014

Dear Administrators:

The Indiana Department of Education was pleased to partner with the FSSA Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning in ensuring an additional pathway for public schools to participate in Paths to QUALITY, Indiana's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for Pre-K. This work helps provide children an equal opportunity to participate in a high quality preschool experience that meets their developmental and educational needs.

Many public schools are already providing these opportunities for their students and this is a way to recognize the quality of the program they are offering at their school for their community.

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to providing the highest quality of support to Indiana's schools, teachers, students and parents. We are working with educators, policy makers, business leaders, and community based organizations to achieve our mission to build an education system of equity and high quality that is focused on student-centered accountability. The Paths to QUALITY for Public Schools is one step to achieving that goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenda Ritz".

Glenda Ritz, NBCT
Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Preschool Classrooms in
Public Schools
Level 1**

Level 1 Preschool Classrooms in public schools will be able to:

- Meet minimum health and safety standards
- Develop and implement basic health and safety policies and procedures

Preschool Classrooms in traditional public schools meet the standards for a level 1 rating providing the following are met:

1. **The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Provider Eligibility Standards(PES) are met and verified by Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning**
2. **Standards regarding teacher child ratios and group sizes have been met as defined up IC12-17.2-4**
3. **Indiana School House regulations for sanitation, fire safety and food service standards are being met as required for public schools as verified by the appropriate state agency.**

Preschool Classrooms in Public Schools Level 2

Level 2 Preschool Classrooms in public schools will be able to:

- Provide an environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and safe for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of all children
- Provide a variety of learning materials that reflect the age, interests, and abilities of each child
- Provide for children's language and literacy skill development
- Provide pertinent program information to families
- Promote professional development and training for staff

Preschool Classrooms in public schools meet the standards for a level 2 rating providing the following are met:

- 1. All requirements of Paths to QUALITY Level 1 are met.**
- 2. Administrator receives orientation and trains staff on *the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children Age Birth to Five (the Foundations)*.**
- 3. Administrator is a member of a nationally recognized early childhood organization.**
- 4. Public School has a written philosophy and goals for preschool children.**
- 5. 25% of teaching staff, including the Director, have either a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent certificate, OR an early childhood degree or equivalent degree, OR have completed 45 clock hours of educational training leading to an Early Childhood/Child Development degree or CDA credential.**
- 6. At least 50% of teaching staff participate annually in a minimum of 15 clock hours of professional development focused on topics relevant to early childhood.**
- 7. A system is in place for communicating pertinent information to families, daily and in an annual family conference for each child.**

8. Classroom environments are welcoming, nurturing and safe for children to have interactions and experiences that promote their physical, social and emotional well being. Indicators must include:

1. Each child and his/her family are warmly acknowledged
2. Each child feels safe, accepted, and protected and this is supported by daily practices that reinforce respect for people, feelings, ideas, and materials
3. Children are under adult supervision at all times
4. The environment includes representation of each child and family (including all age groups, abilities, and cultures), which might include books, pictures, photographs, music/songs, games, toys, dress-up clothes/materials, and foods
5. A place for storage of each child's personal belongings and possessions is labeled with the child's name
6. Teachers communicate with and listen to children (verbal and non-verbal messages) with lots of one-on-one attention throughout the day and usually at eye-level, including time when the teacher is down on the floor with the children
7. Children's ideas, requests, and questions are acknowledged with a verbal response or physical gesture
8. Children's feelings are acknowledged with an accepting, non-critical verbal response or physical gesture
9. Teachers refrain from negative verbal or physical responses to children at all times, which includes yelling, criticizing, scolding, threatening, using sarcasm, name calling, yanking, pinching, squeezing, or spanking
10. Destructive or disruptive behavior is addressed with children (face-to-face rather than from a distance) by the teacher, explaining the effect of the behavior, stating the desired behavior and redirecting, or helping the child make alternate choices
11. Conflicts are resolved by/with children through a problem-solving approaches (acknowledge feelings, listen to children share what happened, ask for ideas or solutions, and follow through)
12. The teacher sometimes joins in children's play, expanding upon their ideas and playing interactively
13. The classroom is generally characterized by varying sounds and/or comfortable conversations from engaged children and involved adults

9a. Daily schedule provides ample time for child-directed choices with activities and materials that are geared to the age, interests, and abilities of each child. Indicators must include:

1. The daily schedule is consistent and predictable
2. The classroom is arranged with areas for individual, small group, and large group activities
3. Children are encouraged to choose the area in which they want to participate, and whether they want to play alone, with one friend, or with several
4. Routine tasks (which might include labeling, sorting, classifying, folding clothes, counting while cleaning up or setting the table) are used as learning opportunities
5. Transitions are generally relaxed, allowing time for play and completing activities. Children are transitioned from one activity to the next to avoid idle sitting and waiting time
6. Meal times are relaxed, with no scolding or nagging. Children are encouraged to sample new foods but allowed to eat the foods of their choice
7. If Nap/rest time is offered, nap/quiet time is relaxed with alternative, supervised quiet activities available for the non-nappers and early risers.
8. The teacher has a system for rotating toys and materials for variety so that unused toys are stored and later reintroduced
9. TV/VCR/DVD, if used, is primarily an educational experience. Teacher discusses what is viewed with children; OR TV/VCR/DVD is not used at all

9b. Outdoor play time indicators must include:

1. Outdoor play is included daily when weather, air quality, or environmental safety conditions do not pose a health risk. Active indoor play may be a replacement when necessary
2. Outdoor/large motor activities and plentiful play materials for a variety of skills are offered (for example, climbing, running, jumping, balancing, riding and playing with balls)
3. Outdoor play areas are safe and supervised appropriately.

10a. The classroom is arranged and utilizes enough materials and activities to provide a variety of age and developmentally appropriate interest centers that invite children's exploration. Each interest center must contain at least three different items. Interest centers must include:

1. Reading:
Materials might include books, soft washable seating/pillows for use while reading
2. Writing:
Materials might include writing tools, paper, envelopes, typewriter, letters, and numbers
3. Art:
Materials might include drawing materials (crayons, markers, thick pencils, variety of paper, sizes and types, not coloring books or dittos/worksheets), painting materials, tools (scissors, hole punch, tape), three-dimensional materials (play dough, clay with tools), collage materials (catalogs, magazines, paper scraps, fabric pieces, string, yarn, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, craft sticks)
4. Blocks:
Materials might include different size/types of blocks and accessories such as small people, animals, vehicles, road signs, and materials to enhance building, sticks, stones, tape, string, craft sticks, interlocking blocks
5. Dramatic Play:
Materials might include dress-up clothes, such as work boots, high heels, and a variety of hats, career gear/attire/uniforms, purses, billfolds and multi-cultural outfits. Other items would also include large pieces of fabric/scarves, child-size play furniture, dishes, pots, pans, dolls (multicultural dolls included), dollhouse or other play-sets, accessories for dolls, and "props" for different themes
6. Math/Numbers:
Materials might include small objects to count/sort/classify, measuring tools (scales, rulers), numbers/shapes, number games, puzzles and pattern blocks
7. Music and Movement:
Materials might include audio equipment, variety of tapes/CDs, and music boxes, musical toys, instruments, dance props such as scarves/streamers
8. Nature and Science:
Collections of natural items (shells, rocks, flowers, bugs), living plants, pets to care for, science games, toys, magnets, magnifying glasses, cooking opportunities
9. Sensory Play:
Materials might include water, play dough, sand, or similar materials, along with kitchen utensils, measuring containers, shovel, trough, buckets, small cars and trucks and water-play accessories for pouring, measuring, squeezing, and basting
10. Small Motor/Manipulative:
Materials might include blocks, puzzles, crayons, pencils, scissors, interlocking blocks and other small building toys, pegboard and pegs, games, counting materials, sorting or classifying materials and containers

11a. Children are read to daily and encouraged to explore books and other print materials. Indicators must include:

1. Teachers read and/or look at books with children daily, including during quiet, individual lap time
2. Books are available and accessible daily for children to look at and enjoy on their own
3. Children are invited to tell stories or "read" a picture book
4. Children are encouraged to explore print and writing. Examples might include scribbling, inventing spellings, writing their names or other words, and making books
5. Teachers write words dictated by children as they tell a story or describe their pictures
6. A variety of writing materials and toys to be used while writing is available
7. Materials might include: markers, child-sized pencils, chalk and chalk board, paper, envelopes, stamps, tape, paper punch, stickers, magazines, calendars, toy telephones, puppets, tape recorder, alphabet letters, or flannel boards
7. Children are provided language materials daily, in addition to books, which might include puppets, flannel boards, recorded stories, and picture card games
8. Books must include a variety of imaginative, rhyming, and informational books

Preschool Classrooms in Public Schools Level 3

Level 3 Preschool Classrooms in public schools will be able to:

Implement a planned curriculum that addresses the stages of child development

Demonstrate professional growth of Administrator and staff

Facilitate family and staff input into the program

Establish a strategic plan

May be working towards national early childhood accreditation

Preschool Classrooms in public schools meet the standards for a Level 3 rating provided that the following are met:

- 1. All requirements for Paths to QUALITY Level 1 and 2 are met.**
- 2. School has been in operation for a minimum of one academic year.**
- 3. 50% of teaching staff have either a CDA or equivalent certificate, an early childhood degree or equivalent degree OR completed 60 clock hours of educational training leading to an early childhood/child development degree or CDA credential.**
- 4. At least 50% of teaching staff, including the Administrator responsible for the supervision of classroom staff participate annually in a minimum of 20 clock hours of professional development focused on topics relevant to early childhood.**
- 5. Program evaluation is completed annually by families and staff.**
- 6. A strategic plan is completed and includes annual evaluation/ goal setting and long range planning/goal setting.**

7. A written curriculum reflects the program philosophy and goals, is based on child development and appropriate practice and provides for the various ages, ability levels, and developmental stages of the children. This curriculum meets the following requirements:

1. Provides for children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and social-emotional development. It includes goals for children that are consistent with the Indiana Foundations for Young Children
2. Families are made aware of the curriculum used by the program through one or more of the following ways: parent handbooks, newsletters, orientation, and/or family meetings
3. Staff members are oriented to the curriculum. Lead teachers plan daily activities with assistants so that curriculum can be implemented effectively to provide support for children in their active learning experiences
4. The curriculum and goals for children are reflected in everyday practice including through daily, weekly, or monthly written lesson plans
5. Assessment is appropriate to the curriculum and focuses on children's strengths. It may include portfolios, conversations, anecdotal notes, and developmental notes

8a. Children's physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math, and creative development is supported. Indicators must include:

1. Many opportunities throughout the day for communication (all ages), which might include sharing information, pointing out logical relationships, and encouraging children's ability to reason
2. Many opportunities throughout the day for reading
3. Every day children have many experiences and materials available which are based on "The Foundations" to encourage imagination and creativity
4. Children's thinking is stimulated through experimentation, exploration, and access to interesting materials and adult support
5. Displays of children's art are available at children's eye level and show that most art work is exploratory and unique to each child
6. Teachers encourage language and literacy development through interactions which might include books, songs, puppet play, and writing/drawing opportunities
7. Math experiences are a part of everyday activities and routines
8. Daily music experiences are available and may include singing, creative movement, a variety of types of music, and a variety of musical and rhythmic instruments
9. Science exploration is part of daily activities (examples may include, collections of natural objects, living things to care for, cooking, and simple experiments)
10. The daily schedule provides a balance of activities including: quiet and active, individual and small group and large group, child initiated and adult initiated
11. Large group activities are not excessive for any part of the daily routine

9. Children are actively engaged throughout the day in making choices about activities and materials. Indicators must include:

1. Children should be given several free choice periods daily. Children's choice (individual or small group play) occur at least one third of the time and includes indoor and outdoor play
2. The teacher supports children's development by gathering information through child observations that is used to guide lesson planning
3. The teacher supports children's play by providing additional materials and experiences that expand on children's interests and skills
4. The teacher extends learning for children by talking about what they are doing and asking open-ended questions that promote critical thinking skills
5. The teacher finds ways to help children learn skills when it is developmentally appropriate and when the child shows an interest
6. The teacher takes advantage of the many natural learning experiences associated with daily life and makes those "teachable moments" opportunities for learning

10. Plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs are evident. Indicators must include:

1. A written plan is in place for effectively caring for children with special needs
2. Space is arranged to provide children of different ages and abilities daily access to materials and opportunities to engage in play and projects without limitation or interference from one another
3. Adaptation of materials occurs to provide children of different ages and abilities daily access to materials and opportunities to engage in play and projects without limitations or interference from one another
4. The teachers include children in age-appropriate self-help activities, such as dressing, picking up toys, washing hands, folding clothes, serving food, and setting or cleaning up meals
5. The teachers answer children's questions about differences in a respectful and factual way

**Preschool Classrooms in
Public Schools
Level 4**

Level 4 Preschool Classroom in a public school will be able to:

Meet the highest standards for high quality early childhood education

Administrator/director agrees to assist other programs in quality improvement through
volunteer mentoring

PreK Classrooms in a public school meet the standards for Level 4 rating provided that the
following are met:

- 1. Program meets all the requirements for Paths to QUALITY Levels 1, 2, and 3.**
- 2. National Early Childhood Education Accreditation has been received and maintained through a national accredited system approved by the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School .**
- 3. Administrator/Director volunteers to informally mentor a program at a Level 1, 2, or 3.**



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